

Creating America's “Main Street of the Midwest”

The Indiana Toll Road's Master Plan
to acquire the designation as a scenic
highway.

Why This Plan Was Created

- The Indiana Toll Road Authority has undertaken the development of the future aesthetic treatments of the Toll Road corridor. This Plan will establish recommendations for landscape, architectural and graphic enhancements. The application of these recommendations will enhance the natural features along the corridor, promote regional tourism and economic development and lead to a long-term goal of acquiring the designation as a scenic highway. This will all be carried out without impact on safety or the efficient movement of traffic and will minimize potentially expensive maintenance requirements.

How We Started

- During the year 2000 the administration of the Indiana Toll Road was considering several improvement projects to Toll Plaza and Travel Plaza areas which would have included landscape enhancements. Discussions with the design firm, Paul I. Cripe, about these projects led to the concept of a “Master Plan” to guide future decisions about landscape or architectural enhancements for the entire Toll Road to make improvements to facilities in a coordinated manner. Over time this would create a more comprehensive impact than a piecemeal approach.

- The director of the Toll Road, Mike Puro, also was interested in exploring ways in which the Toll Road could have a positive impact on the economic development of the communities through which the Toll Road passes. One such concept involved the possibility of a future Toll Road that could be enhanced in ways that eventually would allow for a designation as a scenic highway. This designation would have multiple benefits. It would promote tourism efforts by creating a new reason to travel the Toll Road and make a Toll Road journey a destination in itself. The in turn would create more opportunities for local communities to draw Toll Road travelers into their attractions and special events. The additional use could also generate revenue, which could support further enhancements. The Toll Road was already working with the I-80/90 Tourism Development Commission to profile travelers along the Indiana Toll Road in order to explore methods for marketing tourism opportunities along the corridor.

- The Toll Road District decided to proceed with the development of a Master Plan that would explore the historic, cultural and environmental features of the communities surrounding the Indiana Toll Road. It would then identify ways in which the Toll Road facilities could be enhanced to highlight local characteristics and improve the aesthetic appeal of the Toll Road corridor and facilities. Paul I. Cripe was hired to accomplish this task and a team of planners and designers was assembled to begin work on the Indiana Toll Road Landscape Master Plan.

Plan Development

- The design team's first task was to assemble background material and become familiar with the facilities and environments along the Toll Road corridor. Examples of potential enhancements along other road corridors were gathered and creative brain storming began. The next step involved gathering input from in-house and external stakeholders. A meeting with in house stakeholders was conducted in June, 2001 and involved Toll Road staff from roadway maintenance, building maintenance, toll collection, patron services, operations, design, engineering and administration. This meeting was very productive in that many of the constraints due to maintenance or safety were identified and reactions to design ideas were gauged. Issues discussed included creative use of plants, new materials, use of color, maintenance practices and how patrons use Toll and Travel Plazas.

- In late July and early August of 2001 a series of meetings with external stakeholders were conducted at the Toll Road Administration building. A meeting was held for each zone of the Toll Road. Representatives of many of the adjacent communities, economic development commissions, tourism commissions and facilities were in attendance. Many issues involving the improvement of the Toll Road landscape and facilities were discussed as were ideas for promoting the local communities along the way. Comments heard frequently that the Toll Collection personnel were good will ambassadors and that the Indiana Toll Road is highly valued for it's safety and ease of use, especially during winter storm events. A willingness to work with the Toll Road to create enhancements was also a common theme. Many of the ideas generated during these meeting were used to develop the recommendations for future improvements.

- The process of finalizing the Master Plan involved synthesizing the many pieces of information gathered and ideas generated into a useable format. An Overall Recommendation section was developed to identify those elements that can be enhanced throughout the Toll Road system and that will serve to visually coordinate the improvements. A further section of recommendations for each zone of the Toll Road is also included.

Landscape Master Plan Mission Statement

- The Mission of the Landscape Master Plan is to provide a comprehensive review and analysis of the landscape architecture, architecture, graphics, public relations and technology to enhance the appearance, communication, safety and tourism of northern Indiana.

Goals and Objectives

- To create a unique vision for the Indiana Toll Road that explores the possibility of a future designation as a scenic highway and incorporates the following goals and objectives:

Goal One: Enhance the aesthetic qualities of the Indiana Toll Road Corridor landscape by:

- Developing landscape and architectural standards that are site specific to the different landscape zones along the Toll Road and that draw on characteristics from the regional and seasonal attractions within the Toll Road regions,
- Utilizing the existing landscape where possible, as a base on which to develop enhancements, and
- Developing unique treatments where the natural landscape is depleted, and providing emphasis to major events along the Toll Road.

Goal Two: Promote the natural and cultural features of the Indiana Toll Road Corridor by:

- Developing the Toll Road as a “Gateway to Indiana”, including major gateway elements at the borders with Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio,
- Developing an overall theme for the Toll Road that highlights the unique natural and cultural features of the corridor,
- Creating regional themes that can be utilized as identifying elements for the various segments or zones of the corridor, and
- Highlighting local and regional attractions within each zone and creating minor gateways to local communities.

Goal Three: Provide a cost-effective Plan for landscape and architectural enhancements of the Indiana Toll Road without impacting the safety and efficiency of use by:

- Developing low maintenance, durable design solutions,
- Developing long range maintenance recommendations that reflect the budgetary restraints currently in place, and
- Developing recommendations for phasing and implementation.

Zones of the Toll Road

- It was decided early on that the Toll Road corridor would need to be divided into planning segments. Each segment would reflect the different regions of the Toll Road. Fortunately the I-80/90 Tourism Development Commission had already done this to guide their marketing efforts. The decision was made to use those designations with some adjustment to allow for the addition of an Urban Zone designation for the Lake County area.

These Planning zone segments are as follows:

- **Urban Zone** – Lake County
- **North Coast Zone** – Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties
- **Golden Dome Zone** – St. Joseph County
- **Amish Country Zone** – Elkhart County and LaGrange County
- **Lakes Country Zone** – Steuben County

What is a Scenic Byway or Highway?

- Scenic byways can be designated at the local, state or national level. Some are called ‘heritage routes.’ Others may be called ‘rustic roads’ or ‘backcountry byways.’ Some of these designations differ slightly. The U.S. Forest Service began its National Forest Service Scenic Byway designation program in 1988. In 1991, the US Department of Transportation established its National Scenic Byways program. This designation recognizes the intrinsic or unique qualities and resources of a particular corridor. It is a special route that provides the public with access to beautiful scenery and the cultural and natural riches of a region.

- Intrinsic quality means scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archaeological, or natural features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctly characteristic of an area. Archaeological quality involves those characteristics of the scenic byway corridor that are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric life that are visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted. Cultural quality is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people. Historic quality encompasses legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or manmade, that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation of the past. Natural quality applies to those features in the visual environment that are in a relatively undisturbed state. Recreational quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon, the natural and cultural elements of the corridor's landscape. Scenic quality is the heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment.

The designation of the Toll Road as a scenic byway will benefit the Toll Road and Northern Indiana in the following ways:

- Increased public use and attention
- Identification on national maps and publications
- Additional funding opportunities
- Increased tourism and economic development opportunities

How This Plan Will Be Used

- The Indiana Toll Road Landscape Master plan is a tool to guide the future aesthetic appearance of the Toll Road Corridor. Staff and consultants of the Toll Road District will use this Master Plan as a reference for landscape and architectural treatments when working on new projects. The Toll Road District does not intend to carry out an instant aesthetic “makeover” of the Toll Road Corridor. This would be cost prohibitive. Rather, as stated by Samuel E. Wolfe, Chief Operations Engineer, “landscape improvements will be incorporated at the start of each new design.” The Master plan contains comprehensive guideline for the future landscape and architectural standards of the corridor as a whole and also more specific guideline for sub-sections or Zones, as they are referred to in the document, were established based on individual aesthetic and cultural characteristics of the Zones and their proximity to major natural features. Each Zone has its own aesthetic theme, specific design recommendations and specific planting list. However, these recommendations should be read in conjunction with the overall Design Recommendations.

Toll Road Mission

- We provide our customers the best transportation system that enhances mobility, stimulates economic growth, and integrates safety efficiency and environmental sensitivity.

Created In Partnership

- By the State of Indiana Toll Road District, Cripe Inc., CTE Inc., Jacob Associates, and Representatives of the Communities Along the Toll Road Corridor.

Specific Projects



Mile Post 1 – Hammond, Indiana

- Ramp to US 41 (Indianapolis Blvd at the Illinois state line.)



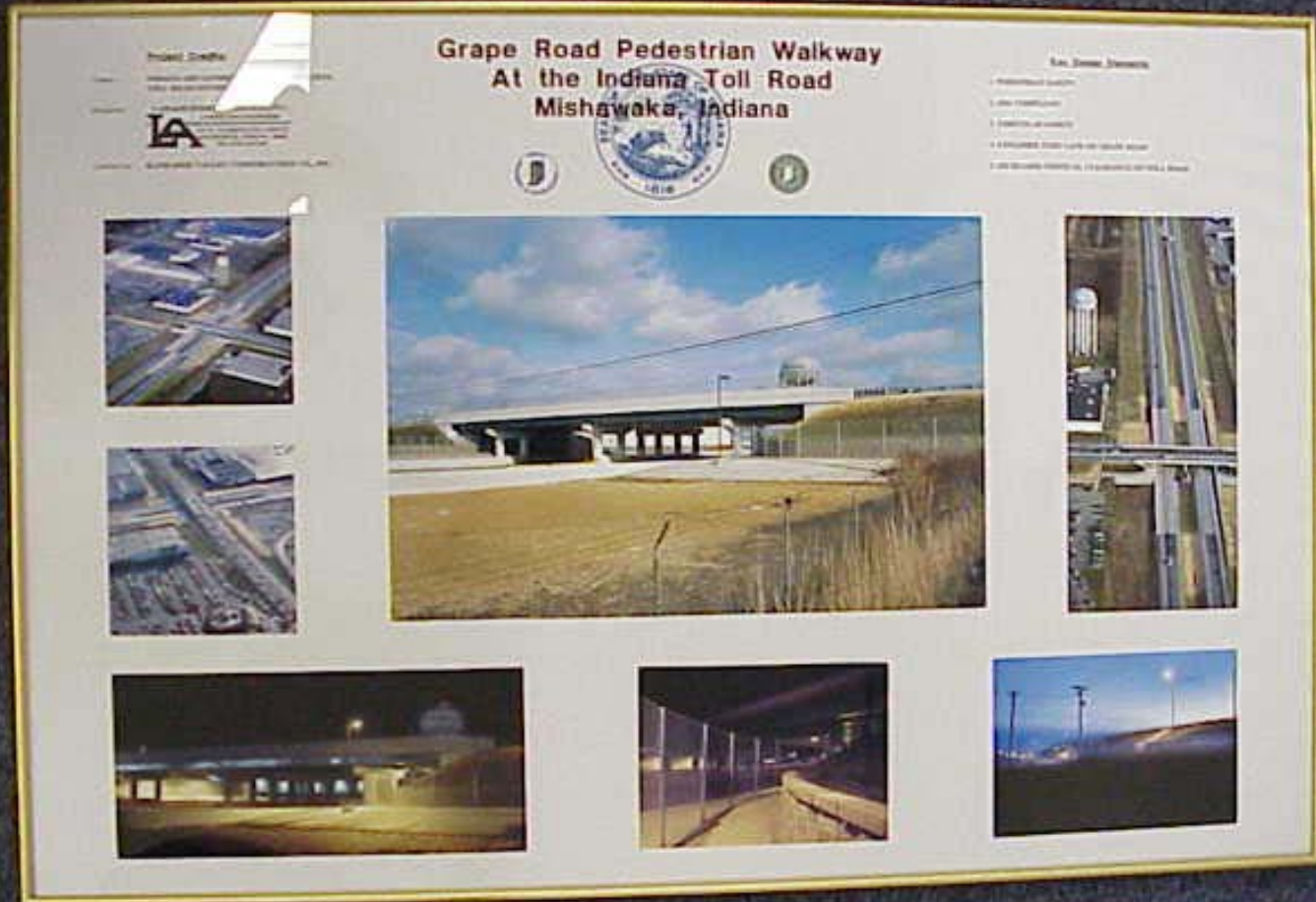
Olive Road – St Joseph County

- In the City of South Bend, Blackthorn Development northwest of the South Bend Regional Airport



Grape Road – St Joseph County

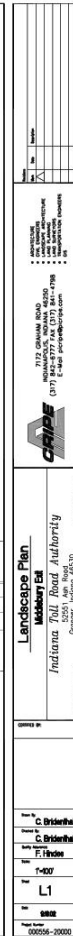
- In the city of Mishawaka, sidewalk under Grape Road bridge.



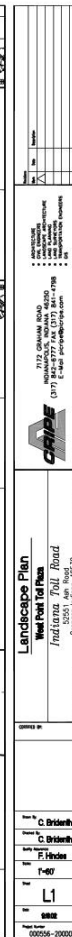
Four Landscape Plans

Four landscape plans by Paul I. Cripe
Associates and CTE Inc.

- Implementation Exit 121 in LaGrange County.



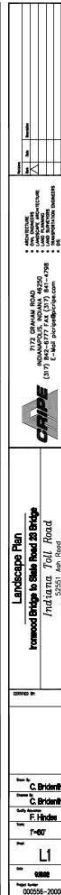
- Implementation MP 1 in Lake County.



- Developed for MP 56 Rolling Prairie in LaPorte County.



- Developed for MP 79 South Bend in St. Joseph County.



Context Sensitive Solutions

- Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) need Communication, Cooperation, and Coordination (CCC)